Course title: Society & Politics in Contemporary Spain

Language of instruction: English

Professor: Javier Arregui

Professor’s contact and office hours: Thursdays 12.00-13.00 hours – Office 20.104

Course contact hours: 45

Recommended credit: 3 US credits-5 ECTS credits

Course prerequisites:
This course is oriented to students interested in Spanish politics. The course does not assume prior knowledge of Spanish and/or European politics.

Language requirements: None

Course description:
This course is designed to give both political science and non-political science majors an overview of fundamental issues in the study of Spanish Politics. The core of the course is the study of the nature and functioning of the Spanish democratic system installed since the middle of the seventies, paying special attention to the main political processes, institutions, actors, political culture and electoral behaviour. At the beginning of the course, we will also spend some time studying the previous Spanish democratic experience (1931-1936), its collapse (1936-1939), the authoritarian rule imposed by Franco and the Spanish transition to democracy (1975-1978) which has strongly influenced the current features of the Spanish political system.

Learning objectives:
At the end of this course the students will be able:
1) to understand the development and working of the Spanish political system in the last decades;
2) to comprehend the relationship between democracy and Spanish politics;
3) to become familiar with the key literature on Spanish and European comparative politics.
Course workload:
The workload of the course rests on the assigned readings that students are expected to complete prior to coming to class and to contribute to discussion during seminars. That is, during lectures, I will pose questions to encourage students’ participation and developing critical thinking. Students will also have to submit two short essays during the course which will be related to the field studies. Finally they will have to make a home midterm exam and also home final exam.

Methods of instruction:
The course is structured in both lecture and seminar formats. In the first part of each session there will be a lecture where the professor will present the most relevant issues of the topic at stake. In the second part there will be a seminar where students will have the opportunity to relate concepts, to express their ideas as well as to develop their critical thinking on the topics under study. In addition, we will make two field studies during the course. The first one will be a simulation of the National Elections in Spain through which students will be able to know in detail which are the main political parties and which type of ideas they defend across different policy areas. The second field study will be a guided visit to the Catalan Parliament where students will be able to know in detail the political power that the Spanish Constitution has transferred to Autonomous regions in Spain.

Method of assessment:
The final grade will be calculated as follows:

- Class attendance: 10%
- Term papers: 20%
- Take Home Midterm exam: 30%
- Final exam: 40%

Absence policy:
Excused absences will only be justified by an official medical report or probable family emergency. Any other reason will not justify an absence to class or changing the date of an exam. The absence policy is the following:

- 3 absences: the student loses one point out of ten.
- 4 absences: the student loses two points out of ten.
- 5 absences or more: the student receives an "Incomplete" for the course.
Classroom norms:
- No food or drink is permitted in class
- Students will have a ten-minute break after one-hour session

Weekly schedule

WEEK 1

**Session 1 - Course description** (Mo, Sept. 27th)

Introduction to the Course, Objectives, Course format, Principal contents and overview of the course.

No readings

**Session 2 - Basics Facts of the Spanish Political System and Spanish Society** (Wed, Sep. 29th)

Reading:


**Recommended reading:**


WEEK 2

**Session 3 - The Legacy of History: the Institutional legacy of Francoism** (Mo, Oct. 4th)

Institutional legacies – The absence of a tradition of democratic stability- From dictatorship to democracy- The Emergence of democratic institutions.

Reading:


**Recommended reading:**

**Session 4 - Transition from Dictatorship to Democracy I: Theories of Democratization** (Wed, Oct. 6th)

The democratic moment- What democracy is ... and is not-

Democracy’s Third and Fourth Waves – Dangers and dilemmas of democracy – Explanatory factors for the consolidation of a democracy.

**Reading:**


**Recommended reading:**


**WEEK 3**

**Session 5 – Transition from Dictatorship to Democracy II: The Spanish Case** (Mo, Oct. 11th)


**Reading:**


**Recommended reading:**


**Session 6 - The Institutions of the Spanish Democracy I: Parliamentarism versus Presidentialism** (Wed, Oct. 13th)

Reading:

Lijphart, ´Parliaments: Concentration vs. Sharing of Legislative Power´, in Democracies, pp. 90-105.

Recommended reading:


WEEK 4

**Session 7 – The Institutions of the Spanish Democracy II: The Central Government, the executive and the Monarchy** (Mo, Oct. 18th)


Reading:


Recommended reading:


**Session 8 - The Institutions of the Spanish Democracy III- The structure of the Spanish state: The Autonomous Regions (Comunidades Autónomas)** (Wed, Oct. 20th)

From authoritarian centralism to the Estado de las Autonomías – Theoretical models of decentralised power -Institutionalizing the Estado de las Autononmías – The natura of the sytem – The problems and the consequences of the system.

Reading:

Recommended reading:


WEEK 5

Session 9 – The Institutions of the Spanish Democracy IV: Political Parties and Party System in Spain (Mo, Oct. 25th)


Reading:


Recommended reading:


Session 10 - Simulation session (Wed, Oct. 27th)

WEEK 6

Session 11 – The Institutions of the Spanish Democracy V: Legislatures in Spanish Politics (Wed, Nov. 3th)


Reading:


Recommended reading:


**WEEK 7**

**Session 12 – Midterm (take home exam)** (Mo, Nov. 27th)

**Session 13 - The Institutions of the Spanish Democracy VI:** The judiciary within the Spanish Political System (Wed, Nov. 29th)


**Reading:**

Heywood, The Judiciary and the State of the Law, pp. 103-120.

**Recommended readings:**


**WEEK 8**

**Session 14 – The Institutions of the Spanish Democracy VIII: The Spanish Media as political actors** (Mo, Nov. 8th)

Mass media and democracy – Regulating the media (the public service model/ the market model) – Theories of mass media – The impact of the media in the legislative, the executive and the judiciary in Spain – Ownership and control of the media in Spain.

**Reading:**


**Recommended reading:**

Session 15 – The Institutions of the Spanish Democracy IX: The Electoral System in Spain (Wed, Nov. 10th)

Types of electoral system – Plurality and majority systems – Proportional representation in Spain – Why the electoral system matter.

Reading:


Recommended reading:


WEEK 9

Session 16 – Elections, political competition and the Spanish voter (Mo, Nov. 15th)


Reading:


Recommended reading:


Session 17 - Political culture and political participation in Spain (Wed, Nov. 17th)

Cultural legacies: a tradition of discontinuities – Political attitudes in Spain - Dissatisfaction and Disaffection – Moderation and (Center) Leftism – Materialism and postmaterialism - Regional subcultures – Regionalist and nationalist identities.
Reading:


Recommended reading:


WEEK 10

Session 18 – Visit to the Parliament (Mo, Nov. 22th)

Session 19 – The Europeanization of the Spanish Political System (Wed, Nov. 24th)

The European integration process – Europeanization and institutional analysis – Effects of the Europeanization process in the Spanish political system – The merger between the domestic and the European policy processes.

Reading:


Recommended reading:


WEEK 11

Session 20 – General Conclusion: The Spanish Democracy. Majoritarian or Pluralistic? (Mo, Nov. 29th)

Formal conclusions of the course with respect to the main political and institutional characteristics of the Spanish political system within a comparative perspective.

Reading:

**Recommended reading:**


**Session 21 - Final exam** (Wed, Dec. 1st)

**WEEK 12**

**Session 22 – Final conclusions of the course** (by students) (Mo, Dec. 13th)

**Required readings:**


Recommended bibliography:


STONE-SWEET, A., 2000, Governing with judges: Constitutional politics in Europe, Oxford University Press, pp. 31-60.


